



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

APRC/20/REP

# REPORT

Thimphu,  
Bhutan, 1-4  
September 2020  
(virtual)

## **Thirty-fifth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**



Required citation:

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*FAO Member Nations in the Asia and the Pacific Region*

Afghanistan	Kazakhstan	Philippines
Australia	Kiribati	Republic of Korea
Bangladesh	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Russian Federation
Bhutan	Malaysia	Samoa
Brunei-Darussalam	Maldives	Singapore
Cambodia	Marshall Islands	Solomon Islands
China	Micronesia (Federated States of)	Sri Lanka
Cook Islands	Mongolia	Thailand
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Myanmar	Timor-Leste
Fiji	Nauru	Tonga
France	Nepal	Tuvalu
India	New Zealand	United States of America
Indonesia	Niue	Uzbekistan
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Pakistan	Vanuatu
Japan	Palau	Viet Nam
	Papua New Guinea	

*Date and place of the Sessions of the FAO Regional Conferences for Asia and the Pacific*

First	- Bangalore, India, 27 July – 5 August 1953
Second	- Kandy, Ceylon, 20-25 June 1955
Third	- Bandung, Indonesia, 8-18 October 1956
Fourth	- Tokyo, Japan, 6-16 October 1958
Fifth	- Saigon, Republic of Viet Nam, 21-30 November 1960
Sixth	- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-29 September 1962
Seventh	- Manila, Philippines, 7-21 November 1964
Eighth	- Seoul, Republic of Korea, 15-24 September 1966
Ninth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 4-15 November 1968
Tenth	- Canberra, Australia, 27 August – 8 September 1970
Eleventh	- New Delhi, India, 17-27 October 1972
Twelfth	- Tokyo, Japan, 17-27 September 1974
Thirteenth	- Manila, Philippines, 5-13 August 1976
Fourteenth	- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 July – 3 August 1978
Fifteenth	- New Delhi, India, 5-13 March 1980
Sixteenth	- Jakarta, Indonesia, 1-11 June 1982
Seventeenth	- Islamabad, Pakistan, 24 April – 3 May 1984
Eighteenth	- Rome, Italy, 8-17 July 1986
Nineteenth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 11-15 July 1988
Twentieth	- Beijing, China, 23-27 April 1990
Twenty-first	- New Delhi, India, 10-14 February 1992
Twenty-second	- Manila, Philippines, 3-7 October 1994
Twenty-third	- Apia, Western Samoa, 14-18 May 1996
Twenty-fourth	- Yangon, Myanmar, 20-24 April 1998
Twenty-fifth	- Yokohama, Japan, 28 August-1 September 2000
Twenty-sixth	- Kathmandu, Nepal, 13-15 May 2002
Twenty-seventh	- Beijing, China, 17-21 May 2004
Twenty-eighth	- Jakarta, Indonesia, 15-19 May 2006
Twenty-ninth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 26-31 March 2009
Thirtieth	- Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, 27 September-1 October 2010
Thirty-first	- Hanoi, Viet Nam, 12-16 March 2012
Thirty-second	- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 10-14 March 2014
Thirty-third	- Putrajaya, Malaysia, 7-11 March 2016
Thirty-fourth	- Nadi, Fiji, 9-13 April 2018
Thirty-fifth	- Thimphu, Bhutan, 1-4 September 2020 (virtual)

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## SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***MATTERS REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL***

- *Results and Priorities for FAO Activities in the Region* (Paragraphs 31, ii, iv, v and 32, iii and v-viii)
- *Decentralized Offices Network* (Paragraph 34 i, ii, iv and vii)
- *Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs* (Paragraphs 36, 40 and 42-47)
- *Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-23 for the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific* (Paragraph 52 )
- *Date and Place of the 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific* (Paragraph 53 )

### ***MATTERS REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF THE CONFERENCE***

- *The impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and FAO's response* (Paragraph 21, ix, Paragraph 22, ii, iii and v-viii)
- *State of Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific Region, including Future Prospects and Emerging Issues* (Paragraph 24, i, iii, iv-vi )
- *Setting regional priorities to manage water for agriculture under conditions of water scarcity* (Paragraph 26, ii-iv)
- *Building resilience of small-scale fisheries to ensure food security and nutrition in the Pacific* (Paragraphs 27, viii and 28, iii -vi)
- *Building sustainable and resilient food systems in Asia and the Pacific* (Paragraphs 29, iii and 30, i, ii, iv-vi)



## I. Introductory Items

### **Organization of the Conference**

1. The thirty-fifth session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) was held from 1 to 4 September 2020. The Session was convened virtually on an exceptional basis, after formal consultation with the host country, the Kingdom of Bhutan as well as the Asia and the South-West Pacific Regional Groups, in response to public health constraints on travel and meetings related to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is the first time that any session of a FAO regional conference is being organized using this modality. The Conference was organized in two parts: the Senior Officers Meeting from 1-2 September and the Ministerial-level Meeting from 3-4 September.
2. The APRC agreed to conduct the proceedings virtually, on an exceptional basis, complying as far as possible with the established rules and practices.
3. Representatives from 41 Member Nations participated in the Regional Conference. Representatives of 9 inter-governmental organizations and 34 international and non-governmental organizations attended as observers. Representatives of 13 sister United Nations organizations and specialized agencies also attended as observers.

### **The Conference and Inaugural ceremonies**

4. Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan and Mr. Jong Jin Kim, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative of FAO, presented opening addresses.
5. Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji welcomed delegates and participants formally opened the first virtual APRC. He highlighted that COVID-19 was here to stay for the near future and the pandemic had severely impacted food, trade, agriculture and livelihoods. It was necessary to build resilience and sustainability in food systems to ensure continued food security and nutrition for people in the region. He emphasised the importance of regional cooperation and partnership so that countries can jointly overcome the impacts of the pandemic on their economies.
6. Mr. Kim appreciated the strong support of the Royal Government of Bhutan for making all possible arrangements to host the meeting in February 2020 which was subsequently postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He thanked the Royal Government of Bhutan for their leadership and collaboration in organizing the virtual conference. He reflected on the serious challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the threat to the impressive progress made in the region in dramatically reducing extreme poverty and reducing hunger. He noted that this will affect the timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Election of Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur**

7. Delegates unanimously elected Lyonpo Yeshe Penjor, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan as Chairperson of the Ministerial Meeting.
8. Delegates unanimously elected Dr. William D. Dar, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Philippines as Vice-Chairperson of the Ministerial Meeting.
9. Delegates unanimously elected Ms Vanida Khumnirdetch, Director of Bureau of Foreign Agricultural Affairs from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand to serve as Rapporteur of the Ministerial Meeting.
10. Delegates unanimously elected Dasho Rinzin Dorji, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan as Chairperson of the Senior Officers Meeting (SOM).

11. Delegates unanimously elected Mr. Rodolfo V. Vicerra, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, Research and Development and Project Development, Philippines as Vice-Chairperson of the SOM.
12. Delegates unanimously elected Ms Vanida Khumnirdetch, Director of Bureau of Foreign Agricultural Affairs from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand to serve as Rapporteur of the SOM.

### **Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable**

13. The Meeting adopted the agenda which is given in Appendix A. Documents submitted to the Meeting are listed in Appendix B.

### **Statement of the Director General**

14. Mr. QU Dongyu, the Director-General of FAO, delivered the statement to the Regional Conference. He extended his gratitude to the Royal Government and people of Bhutan for hosting the first virtual Regional Conference in the midst of a global pandemic. He outlined the vision for the transformation of FAO to support policy and programmes and serve Member Nations with greater dynamism. He emphasised the importance of the APRC's guidance and strategic direction to FAO for the provision of contextualized solutions for many pressing issues in the Asia and Pacific region and achieve the SDGs.

### **Statement of the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council**

15. Mr. Khalid Mehboob, the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, delivered the statement. He emphasized the important role of the Regional Conference in defining FAO policies and priorities for the region. He urged Member Nations to ensure that regional priorities were appropriately incorporated in the new FAO strategic framework. He noted the convening of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and recognised the central role of FAO, reflecting the prominence that the 2030 Agenda affords to the Organization's core mandate.

### **Statement of the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**

16. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment of Fiji, representing the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, reminded the Conference of the recommendations of the previous session. He emphasized that FAO's technical expertise and assistance to countries was more important than ever before due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for supporting long term recovery actions. He briefed delegates on activities subsequent to the 34<sup>th</sup> session to bring these recommendations to the attention of the FAO Conference and Council.

### **Statement on the second joint FAO and Pacific Community (SPC) Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Meeting Communiqué**

17. Mr. Lopao'o Natanielu Mu'a, Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Samoa, delivered the statement to the Regional Conference on the communique of the Second Joint FAO and Pacific Community (SPC) Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Meeting convened in Apia, Samoa on 4 October 2019. He briefed delegates on the progress made in developing joint action for food security and nutrition in the Pacific Islands and took into account the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) decision under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The biennial Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA) is now recognized as representing the premier agricultural event in the Pacific Region.

### **Statement of the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security**

18. Mr. Thanawat Tiensin, Permanent Representative of Thailand to FAO delivered the statement to the Regional Conference. He expressed concern that worrying trends due to the impact of COVID-

19 on food and agriculture could lead to a new food crisis, and further impair the achievement of SDG2 and other related targets of the 2030 Agenda. He highlighted the inclusive international and intergovernmental process followed by CFS to develop voluntary global policy guidance for convergence and coherence to achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote the progressive realization of the importance of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.

### **Statement of the Representative of the CSOs**

19. Ms. Chime P. Wangdi, Secretary General of the Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan, summarized the views of the civil society organizations for the Regional Conference. She noted that while the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in health, wealth, race and gender, it has had a positive outcome in the increased importance of local small-scale production and the importance of healthy and environmentally sound food systems. She recommended greater inclusion of small holders, family farmers, indigenous and vulnerable people, women and youth in all aspects of agricultural development.

### **Statement of the Representative of the private sector**

20. Mr. Grahame Dixie, Executive Director Grow Asia, summarized the views of the private sector, for the first time, for the Regional Conference. He highlighted the role of the private sector was already playing in the progress of countries towards the SDGs through sustainable and inclusive business initiatives. He briefed the Conference on drivers and needs of the farming sector in the region and the solutions that were available and could be implemented through active partnership with all stakeholders.

## **II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Issues**

### **A. The impact of COVID-19 on Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and FAO's response**

21. The Conference:

- i. Recognized that Asia and the Pacific region has been seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as evidenced by the high caseloads in many countries and the economic repercussions of lockdowns, travel restrictions and disruptions of food supply chains.
- ii. Expressed concern that multiple threats could combine to push hundreds of millions into hunger, poverty and acute food insecurity and malnutrition, reversing a decade or more of developmental progress. Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be critical for achieving the SDGs.
- iii. Acknowledged the vulnerability of those countries which are in food crisis situations in Asia as well as those heavily dependent on food imports, such as the Pacific small island countries.
- iv. Appreciated FAO's support to perform rapid assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on food security, supply chains and livelihoods including collection of evidence and its analysis.
- v. Acknowledged that most countries of the region acted promptly and responsibly to cushion the impact on vulnerable populations, by rolling out social protection measures and safety net schemes to shore up food security, counteract the impacts of joblessness, and provide financial support to small businesses.
- vi. Acknowledged that many countries, recognising the importance of agriculture, brought in measures to facilitate farming operations and export-import pathways so as not to disrupt food supply chains and livelihoods of farmers.

- vii. Highlighted the importance of preserving and enhancing the resilience of supply chains by increasing food production capacity, strengthening food reserves at national and regional levels, as well as improving national food logistics systems.
  - viii. Highlighted the necessity of continuing with health and safety protocols and preventive measures; ensuring regional co-operation for uninterrupted functioning of food supply chains, markets and open trade through close communication and collaboration with all stakeholders including the private sector.
  - ix. Emphasized the imperative to build back better through sound policies and programs that place greater focus on resilient food systems, nutrition-sensitive food diversification, improved fisheries' sustainability given its important role in food security, particularly in the Pacific; improved storage and logistic infrastructure; leveraging of accessible digital innovations and green and climate-resilient technologies; reduced food loss and waste and improved food safety norms.
  - x. Highlighted the importance of safeguarding livelihoods and expanding social protection and safety net systems essential to ensure food security and nutrition for vulnerable groups including women, children, migrants, and indigenous communities, small holders and family farmers especially during and in the aftermath of COVID-19.
  - xi. Underlined that even without COVID-19, the region has its share of serious trans-boundary issues. These include *inter alia*: Fall Armyworm, locusts, coconut *Rhinoceros* beetle, wheat blast and African Swine Fever – some of which were brought under control through timely interventions and support from FAO.
  - xii. Expressed concern over the destruction caused by natural calamities such as cyclones, drought and water scarcity and floods in many countries. Solutions to these challenges require broad-based partnerships between countries governments, development partners, academia, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs).
22. Recommended FAO to:
- i. Continue its support to governments with policy advice, measures, tools, practices and programming to overcome COVID-19 impacts and help design recovery programs in the short and medium term.
  - ii. Provide technical assistance for transformative solutions and long-term recovery and resilience through development of inclusive and participatory policies for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food systems and natural resource management.
  - iii. Support Member Nations to improve mechanization, commercialization, diversification and climate-smart investments, reduce post-harvest losses and ease labour constraints which will be reinforced by innovations, digital technologies and transformation in food systems.
  - iv. Use its expertise for developing technical and economic cooperation in response to the COVID-19 crisis including for low- and middle- income countries, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), with a view to improving living standards of people through sustainable and inclusive growth processes.
  - v. Increase support to countries to improve their data collection and statistical analysis capabilities, and to collaborate with other multilateral and regional organizations in collecting and disseminating agriculture and food systems information.

- vi. Leverage the COVID-19 Umbrella Programme to mobilize resources for building back better and support greener agriculture that safeguard the livelihoods of smallholders and family farmers and play a strong role in the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNMPTF).
- vii. Assist countries in identifying partnership opportunities including with the private sector and influence development partners and donors through its comparative advantage including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation and through the emerging Hand-in-Hand coordination and matchmaking platforms.
- viii. Emphasise the crucial role of digital technologies and innovations in the food systems; ensure digital literacy and access for small-scale producers and businesses; improve food safety and biosecurity in fresh markets and address zoonotic disease risk through a strengthened One Health approach; and develop capacity for trade facilitation and open as well as functional food market chains.

### **B. State of Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific Region, including Future Prospects and Emerging Issues**

23. The Conference:
- i. Appreciated the rapid progress in reducing both urban and rural poverty in the region over the past two decades and the important role played by non-farm income in improving the livelihoods of rural families throughout the region.
  - ii. Acknowledged and expressed concern over the trends of increasing income inequality in the region, the recent lack of progress in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment and malnutrition, and continuing high levels of stunting and wasting in many countries of the region, all of which will make it difficult to meet the SDGs.
  - iii. Recognized the increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity in the region, the negative health effects that accompany it, and the strain that it places on health-care systems.
  - iv. Appreciated the continued growth in yields of key staple crops with development and deployment of climate resilient varieties, while noting the diversification of farming systems in response the need for environmental sustainability and changing consumer demand for more diverse dietary intakes.
  - v. Noted the rapid growth in international food trade in the region during the past two decades, while also noting that most food continues to be produced domestically in most Asian countries, with imports playing a much more important role in the domestic food supply in Pacific island countries.
  - vi. Recognized the essential role played by smallholders and family farmers in providing supplies of diverse and nutritious food to the region, and the challenges they face – declining farm size, rising wages, price volatility, climate change, dwindling natural resources, pests, diseases and other risks, dietary diversification, meeting new urban demands and finding ways to integrate into ever more sophisticated agri-food chains.
  - vii. Noted the lack of quality data on many key SDG indicators in numerous countries, in particular for the Pacific island countries.
24. Recommended FAO to:
- i. Provide technical and policy assistance to help smallholders and family farmers increase labour and land productivity for a wide range of food products, including staples, legumes and

pulses, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables, , aquaculture, fisheries and livestock products, and further diversify agriculture to make it more nutrition-sensitive.

- ii. Establish a robust trans-boundary seed system in the region for timely availability and access to good quality and affordable seed of high yielding varieties of different crops
- iii. Continue to support governments in providing comprehensive support for smallholders and family farmers, in the context of the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration to strengthen their resilience and help harness their full potential to contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- iv. Assist governments in addressing food system challenges and developing new innovations, use of ICT and public-private partnerships, to improve management of the natural resources on which sustainable food systems depend.
- v. Assist countries to identify fruitful partnerships, including those promoted by the FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative (HIHI) that will promote achievement of the SDGs.
- vi. Provide technical assistance, where capability gaps are identified, for skill development and capacity building within agri-food systems, eco-system services and in data collection and statistics related to agriculture, food systems, food security and nutrition, and help to mobilize financial resources that can improve the quality and frequency of data collection, especially in the SIDS.
- vii. Continue to support countries to reinforce the role of agriculture for ending hunger and eradicating poverty into their national economic development policies.

### **C. Setting regional priorities to manage water for agriculture under conditions of water scarcity**

25. The Conference:
  - i. Recognized that water scarcity in Asia and the Pacific is worsening and that simultaneously making more water available for other uses and protecting the ecological support functions of freshwater systems is one of the most difficult, important and urgent challenges for sustainable agriculture in the region; and acknowledge the particular water scarcity issues facing Pacific island countries, including saltwater intrusion.
  - ii. Appreciated that in order to address water scarcity, it is necessary to develop an understanding of how water resources are used through a process of water accounting, which underpins transparent and effective water allocation mechanisms.
  - iii. Emphasized that addressing water scarcity in agriculture is essential to making progress towards the SDGs, especially those related to water security, food security and poverty eradication.
  - iv. Welcomed FAO's efforts to support countries in managing the issue via the RAP Water Scarcity Programme that would assess current and future water scarcity, evaluate effective management response options and work to improve governance to assist countries in implementing adaptive management in the agriculture water sector.
26. Recommended FAO to:
  - i. Provide technical assistance to strengthen country capacity to conduct water accounting to quantify scarcity and better understand the factors influencing it, including developing new,

- simple-to-use tools, as well as ICT and innovative technologies to help countries assess water balance, use, current and future demand, and the hydrologic impacts of field interventions at the basin-scale.
- ii. Deliver co-ordinated multi-sectoral actions that improve policy and governance mechanisms in effectively addressing water scarcity, including coherence with key policies on food, energy, industry and environment, with a particular focus on water quality, ecosystem needs, drought management and climate change.
  - iii. Establish a regional high-level collaborative platform on water scarcity to facilitate sharing of country experiences including best practices and lessons learned in water accounting, water allocation, digital innovation and water governance.
  - iv. Lead a high-level regional consultation on managing and adapting to water scarcity in agriculture in the Asia-Pacific.

#### **D. Building resilience of small-scale fisheries to ensure food security and nutrition in the Pacific**

27. The Conference:
- i. Recognized the need to safeguard the contribution of small-scale and coastal fisheries to food security and nutrition, while recognizing and prioritizing actions to be taken to accelerate the rebuilding of coastal areas.
  - ii. Recognized the need to build on the existing international and regional goals for coastal and small-scale fisheries within the context of the Future of Fisheries Roadmap, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries.
  - iii. Recognized that small-scale fisheries are under increasing pressure following the impact of COVID-19 on income, food import and the return of Asian and Pacific populations to rural areas due to job insecurity.
  - iv. Acknowledged the challenge to be faced in accelerating and sustaining efforts to more effectively manage, harvest, process and supply coastal fish to domestic consumers to meet current and future demands for locally produced, highly-nutritious marine resources and contribution to the economy.
  - v. Emphasised the indispensable role coastal fisheries play in the fight against all forms of malnutrition including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency and overweight and obesity.
  - vi. Noted the importance of improved resilience and adaptation to climate change in coastal fisheries to enable sustained benefits from coastal ecosystems and recovery from natural disasters.
  - vii. Recognized that Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing threatens fishery resources in the region and urge FAO to level up assistance to countries on sustainable fisheries and strengthen support to actions to prevent IUU fishing.
  - viii. Welcomed the invitation to join FAO in celebrating the importance of small-scale fisheries through International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022.

28. Recommended FAO to:
- i. Support countries to integrate and mainstream fisheries into healthy diets for food security and nutrition planning as well as into cross-sectoral resilience-building and making fisheries an integral part of disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation.
  - ii. Strengthen integrated planning and management of resources in connected ecosystems (e.g. linking land and sea in integrated management and planning, such as in source-to-sea or ridge-to-reef systems).
  - iii. Support countries to strengthen the resilience of small-scale fisheries to disasters, other risks and climate change.
  - iv. Provide technical support to address fisheries across the food system approaches and reduce gaps in value chains. Effective interventions and capacity development must equally address the different components of the food systems, including production, processing, storage, distribution and consumption as well as enabling the full engagement of stakeholders across the value chain, ensuring gender equity and inclusion of vulnerable groups.
  - v. Assist countries in the implementation of strategies for a sustainable and safe transition from coastal and small-scale lagoon fishing to small-scale pelagic and oceanic fishing including through the improvement of safety at sea for small-scale coastal fisheries and use of small scale fish aggregating devices.
  - vi. Facilitate implementation of regional and international policies and goals on coastal fisheries to support good governance and management in small-scale fisheries including combating IUU fishing. As part of this to co-operate with relevant regional bodies with competence in fisheries.

### **E. Building sustainable and resilient food systems in Asia and the Pacific**

29. The Conference:
- i. Highlighted the importance of food systems approach to tackle the multiple burdens of malnutrition involving manifold stakeholders and sectors.
  - ii. Emphasised the importance of promoting sustainable and resilient food systems approaches that will deliver food security and nutrition for all while building resilience to shocks and maintaining the economic, social and environmental basis to generate food security and nutrition for future generations.
  - iii. Welcomed FAO's attention towards achieving sustainable food systems and underlined that food systems challenges should be addressed in a coherent manner in the context of national situations and capacities.
  - iv. Supported FAO's programme support to strengthen social protection as an intrinsic part of food systems and its continued importance particularly in the light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on regional populations.
  - v. Underlined the importance of systematic collection and analysis of data and statistical analysis that covers various areas of the entire food system and use of the HIHI Geospatial platform coupled with capacity development of Member Nations in order to access and use the same.



- vi. Supported the continued integration of disaster and climate risk management into agriculture sector policies and programmes as part of work to foster sustainable and resilient food systems as well as analysis of country responses to the COVID-19 pandemic to promote learning on improved responses to multi-hazard shocks and appropriate multi-sectoral solutions.
  - vii. Emphasised that social inclusion is essential for promoting sustainable and resilient food systems that generate and sustain economic growth, gainful employment and livelihood opportunities in agri-food chains for smallholder and family farming and fishing communities, which have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - viii. Noted that facilitating an adaptive process of system changes driven by market-led approaches, aligned with national strategies and combined with policy and technological innovations and fostering multi-stakeholder initiatives to build understanding and collaboration on governance issues in the food systems was a vital part of the approach.
30. Recommended FAO to:
- i. Provide guidance on multi-stakeholder interventions and mainstream the food systems approach into national planning processes including policymaking and programme of work of regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).
  - ii. Use innovative technologies, evidence-based analyses and partnerships to develop multi-sectoral solutions for pressing issues such as climate change and trans-boundary pests and diseases and ecosystem restoration to support the adoption of food-systems thinking across the Asia and Pacific region.
  - iii. Provide technical support through projects to enhance multi-sectoral and sector-based action to address climate change risks and support sustainable livelihoods.
  - iv. Use trade linked instruments and harmonize procedures and processes using digital technologies and mobilize and improve public and private sector investment to strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of stakeholders along agri-food value chains including for environmental sustainability and facilitate their access to finance.
  - v. Optimize COVID-19 response and recovery to expand food safety interventions and One Health approach in the region towards reduction of zoonotic risks and AMR, and strengthen the tripartite collaboration between FAO, WHO and OIE.
  - vi. Encourage an enabling environment for research and innovation and support SMEs and MSMEs and small holders to incorporate best regional and international practices, voluntary standards, standards implementation and certification for better market access and participation in modern value chains.

### **III. Programme and Budget Matters**

#### **A. Results and Priorities for FAO in the Asia and Pacific Region**

31. The Conference:
- i. Recognized the important role of FAO in supporting Members in the region to achieve the SDGs, in particular SDG2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture in the region.

- ii. Welcomed the actions taken and the results achieved in 2018 and 2019 in addressing regional challenges, in particular through the five regional initiatives supported by the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, namely, the Zero Hunger Challenge; Blue Growth; Climate Change; One Health; and the Interregional Initiative on SIDS – Pacific Component.
  - iii. Acknowledged the work done on cross-cutting themes, including agricultural data and statistics; improving resilience to food and agricultural threats and emergencies; and enhancing gender equality, women and youth empowerment, as well as biodiversity mainstreaming across sectors.
  - iv. Welcomed the programmatic approach adopted for activities in the region, and supported the fourteen Programme Areas of Focus to support the implementation of the four consolidated and expanded Regional Initiatives (RIs) for 2020-21.
  - v. Emphasized the importance of Rome-based Agencies collaboration (RBAs) and partnership and welcomed the progress FAO has made in forging alliances with other UN Agencies and regional institutions, including ASEAN, SAARC and SPC.
  - vi. Noted progress and plans for the development of the new Strategic Framework, to determine the future strategic direction and priorities of the Organization and promote efficient and effective achievements of results in the field.
  - vii. Highlighted the importance of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and appreciated the further anchoring of FAO's new Strategic Framework in the Sustainable Development Goals.
  - viii. Noted the increasingly active and collaborative role being played by civil society organizations, especially family farmer organizations, in capacity building of their members and in engaging Governments and inter-governmental organizations in policy and programme formulation and implementation in the region.
32. Recommended FAO to:
- i. Continue the implementation of the four consolidated and expanded RIs, based on the already approved RIs at the 34th Session of the Regional Conference, taking into account increasingly important issues, such as overweight and obesity, resilience to multiple risks, trans-boundary pests such as desert locust and animal diseases management and control, food safety, zoonotic disease risks, AMR, water scarcity, biodiversity and green financing and supported taking them into account in the development of the new Strategic Framework.
  - ii. Implement the four RIs through a programmatic approach with a clear focus on delivering tangible large-scale results for sustainable development and for the achievement of SDGs by the Member Nations, and ensure alignment with the new Strategic Framework.
  - iii. Ensure that the expanded RI on Climate Change and Enhancement of Sustainable Management and Use of Natural Resources includes a strong focus on human, social and economic aspects of water management, Blue Growth for fisheries and aquaculture, resilience of small-scale fisheries, forest conservation and climate change risk reduction.
  - iv. Provide technical assistance for transformative solutions and long-term recovery from COVID-19 and build resilience for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food systems and natural resource management.
  - v. Support Member Nations in collaboration and partnership with the private sector, regional and international organizations to build on FAO's normative and standard setting work.

- vi. Mobilize the extensive and rich capabilities and expertise in the region to achieve solutions to the various challenges, maximizing through mechanisms such as South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Hand in Hand Initiative, promoting engagement with civil society, especially family farmers, and the private sector, as well as developing new partnerships.
- vii. Update its technical expertise in accordance with the needs to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to re-profile its workforce at regional office and country offices, in line with the approved further adjustments to the programme of work and budget for 2020-21 by the Hundred and Sixty-fourth Session Council meeting.
- viii. Ensure a participatory and transparent process for the development of the new Strategic Framework.

## **B. Decentralized Offices Network**

33. The Conference considered the report on the Decentralized Officers Network.
34. The Conference:
  - i. Welcomed FAO's continued engagement in the implementation of the UNDS repositioning at regional and country levels, its efforts to identify and seize emerging opportunities for better collaboration with other UN agencies and respond to the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
  - ii. Supported the effort to strengthen the policy and technical capacities to ensure FAO leadership in the region across relevant SDGs, including those under FAO's custodianship and to contribute effectively to the new UN Cooperation Frameworks and common country analysis and stressed the importance of FAO Headquarters continuing its full support to Decentralized Offices to ensure the Organization's impact at the regional, sub-regional and country levels.
  - iii. Acknowledged the efforts to expand new partnerships, including the private sector, and increase the resource mobilization base through new funding sources.
  - iv. Encouraged the pursuit of inclusive partnerships including intensifying current collaboration with Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), International Financial Institutions (IFIs), research and academic institutions as well as civil society and the private sector.
  - v. Welcomed the dedicated office for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and prioritization of support to SIDS and their specific needs including the implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on food security and nutrition, particularly in the Pacific.
  - vi. Noted the measures taken towards increasing the autonomy of the decentralized offices at regional, sub-regional and country level on decision-making in administrative and programmatic areas, including over human resources and procurement in order to improve overall delivery of the strategic programmes, while also acknowledging the need for effective assurance and oversight arrangements.
  - vii. Requested FAO to continue to pursue the review and transformation of the decentralized offices and adjust the business models to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency in the use of the Organization's financial and human resources to better respond to member countries' needs, in consultation with affected Member Nations.

### **C. Hand-in-Hand Initiative: a New Approach**

35. Ministers and delegates appreciated the presentations and perspectives on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative from the Member Nations and other stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Conference recognized the role that the Hand-in-Hand Initiative can play to strengthen national ownership and capacities to accelerate progress to end poverty and hunger and promote rural development as well as economic growth. The benefit of improved use of data and analytics for improved decision-making was underscored and the flexible new matchmaking approach to building multi-dimensional partnerships was welcomed. Enhancement and extension of the Hand-in-Hand approach to strengthen FAO country support to achieve other FAO priority objectives and, especially, for response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated impacts was supported.

### **D. Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs**

36. The Ministerial-level session of the Regional Conference, convened from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> September included 31 Ministers and 28 Vice Ministers and other high level delegates. They underscored recommendations of the Senior Officers Meeting as elaborated in the respective sections of this report.

37. Ministers and delegates underlined that while the Asia and Pacific region has shown impressive economic growth and many countries have achieved food security, it still houses the highest numbers of world's under-nourished population. Multiple burdens of malnutrition are evident in many countries. There is a clear need to address food systems challenges to ensure that farmers and producers produce safe and nutritious food, are assured of sustainable livelihoods and incomes and consumers can access affordable, healthy and sustainable diets. Multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional engagement will be needed to ensure that the sustainable and resilient food systems framework is incorporated into developmental policies.

38. Ministers and delegates conveyed the widespread disruptions to food chains due to COVID-19 affecting food prices, availability and access of food and trade. It disrupted harvests and the new planting season due to lockdowns and restrictions on movement of people, goods and services. Job losses in both urban and rural areas have increased the risk of rising food insecurity and poverty and social crises.

39. Ministers and delegates described country responses to the COVID-19 pandemic through multiple measures to strengthen the resilience of supply chains and the roll-out of food security and social protection programmes to cushion the impact. Enhancing access to social protection and safety nets can increase resilience in vulnerable groups including small holders and family farmers. This includes financial services and insurance mechanisms, conveyed through digital technologies and other innovations. Continuous coordination with regional banks and institutions would also broaden the base for possible financing of efforts to transform agriculture in the region.

40. The Ministers and delegates encouraged FAO to sustain collaboration with regional institutions such as ASEAN, SAARC and SPC in developing approaches that are more effectively implemented on a regional scale such as in policy coherence, statistics, research and development, control of zoonotic risks and trans-boundary pests and diseases and promoting innovative digital technologies.

41. The Regional Conference underscored that risks are constantly rising and changing in agriculture. They highlighted the profound impact of climate change characterized by water scarcity, increasing frequency of adverse climatic events as well as droughts and floods. Addressing these challenges will require improved farming systems with climate change adaptation practices and innovative use of technologies as well as nature-based solutions.

42. Ministers and delegates highlighted the importance promoting sustainable land, water, forestry and fisheries resources management is a priority for the region. Agriculture is a major consumer of freshwater itself and a driver of water scarcity and improvements in productivity and efficiency are required to improve water use, balancing the need for more food with the needs of other sectors and the environment. Pasture and rangelands are also coming under pressure from land degradation. Soil and water management in agriculture is still a key priority for more resilient and sustainable food systems and agriculture.

43. The Ministers and delegates also highlighted the need for strengthened collaboration to support sustainable management and growth in the marine and freshwater fishery and aquaculture sectors, noting that small-scale and industrial operations continue to be an important resource in sustaining regional food security and contributions to the economy.

44. Ministers and delegates emphasised the need for robust biosecurity systems and improved food safety across the supply chain through a strengthened One Health approach to reduce risk of zoonotic diseases and AMR, and prevent risk of future pandemics across the region. They also reinforced the need to address the threat to agriculture from trans-boundary plant pests and animal diseases such as Fall Army Worm, desert locust, African Swine Fever and coconut *Rhinoceros* beetle. Comprehensive measures to address these challenges are more important than ever in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

45. The Regional Conference affirmed that digitalization and innovations could contribute to improvement in agriculture productivity and sustainability. These are increasingly important, especially in areas where there are large areas to cover, extreme terrain and weather and inadequate infrastructure. Promoting innovative precision agriculture and smart farming could improve productivity, including for smallholders, family farmers and medium and large-scale producers.

46. The Ministers and delegates recognized the vital role of small holders, family farmers and fisher folk, including women and youth, in achieving the Agenda 2030 SDGs and called for comprehensive support in harnessing their full potential, notably in the context of the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028).

47. The Ministers and delegates emphasized their efforts to invest in agriculture research, extension and education systems to meet the objectives of transforming agriculture and food systems through upgraded training and extension services. This is also needed to attract youth to agriculture, encourage agri-entrepreneurs and assist countries, especially with ageing farming populations.

#### **E. Bytes to sustain our bites: Leveraging innovation and digital agriculture for SDGs**

48. Ministers and delegates appreciated the renewed focus of FAO on innovations and the efforts at regional level to support processes leading to an enabling environment for new technologies, policies and sustainable business models. The perspectives for digitalization and new technologies and their impact on the future of agriculture, food security and nutrition were provided by a panel comprising Government, national research institutions, private sector and civil society organizations. The Regional Conference also noted novel and various other initiatives currently being employed in agriculture and food systems in a number of countries in the region.

### **IV. Other Matters**

#### **A. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS): Driving Food System Transformation Towards Sustainable Healthy Diets**

49. The Regional Conference was appraised of recent data on food security and nutrition that reveals hunger and malnutrition are on the rise and the world is falling short on the SDG2 targets.

According to the 2020 SOFI report, urgent and unprecedented action to address hunger and malnutrition is required. The Regional Conference appreciated the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) for the country and regional-level impacts of its core products and its ongoing work to develop Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition through its multi-stakeholder and collaborative approach. These will serve as input to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit.

### **B. 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit**

50. Ministers and delegates were informed of the objectives and expected outcomes of the Food Systems Summit to be convened by the United Nations Secretary General during 2021. An innovative preparatory process towards the Summit will help stakeholders to better understand and manage the complex choices that affect developments in food systems and to catalyse the actionable commitments needed to ensure an acceleration of progress towards the SDGs. The Regional Conference was informed about how the Summit may assist Members in identifying appropriate pathways towards more sustainable food systems through the provision of improved data, analysis and decision-making tools and through support to multi-stakeholder platforms to foster dialogue, innovative partnerships and initiatives for action and investment.

### **C. Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023 for the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**

51. The Meeting reviewed the draft Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023 for the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

52. The Meeting endorsed the MYPOW for the 2020-2023 period to frame the work of the Regional Conference, encouraged regular and systematic review of the performance and efficiency of the Conference, and looked forward to receiving a full report at the next session.

### **D. Date and place of the thirty-sixth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**

53. The Regional Conference recommended the acceptance of the gracious offer of the Government of Bangladesh to host the thirty-sixth Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in 2022.

## **V. Concluding items**

### **Adoption of the Report**

54. The Regional Conference unanimously adopted the report as presented by the Rapporteur.

### **Closure of the Regional Conference**

55. The APRC Chair, Lyonpo Yeshe Penjor, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan thanked the participants for their positive contributions, which had led to the conduct of a successful first-ever virtual 35<sup>th</sup> session of the APRC. The Chair subsequently declared the APRC closed.

56. Participants expressed their appreciation to the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting the first-ever virtual APRC and to FAO for the efficient preparation and organization.

**Appendix A****Agenda****I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

1. **Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, and Appointment of the Rapporteur**
2. **Adoption of Annotated Agenda and Timetable**
3. **Statement by the Director-General**
4. **Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council**
5. **Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**
6. **Second Joint FAO and Pacific Community (SPC) Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Meeting Communiqué**
7. **Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**
8. **Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation**
9. **Statement by the Spokesperson of the Private Sector Consultation**
10. **FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative: a New Approach**
11. **Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs**
12. **Bytes to Sustain Our Bites: Leveraging Innovation and Digital Agriculture for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
13. **The Committee on World Food Security (CFS): Driving Food System Transformation Toward Sustainable Healthy Diets**
14. **UN Food Systems Summit**

**II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Issues**

15. **The impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and FAO's response**
16. **State of Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific Region, including Future Prospects and Emerging Issues**
17. **Setting regional priorities to manage water for agriculture under conditions of water scarcity**

18. **Building resilience of small-scale fisheries to ensure food security and nutrition in the Pacific**
19. **Building sustainable and resilient food systems in Asia and the Pacific**

### **III. Programme and Budget Matters**

20. **Results and Priorities for FAO activities in the Region**
21. **Decentralized Offices Network**

### **IV. Other Matters**

22. **Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023 for the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**
23. **Date and Place of the 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific**
24. **Any other matters**

**Adoption of the Report of the Conference**

**Closure of the Conference**



**Appendix B****List of Documents**

<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/aprc35/documents/en/>

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>
APRC/20/1 Rev.2	Provisional Annotated Agenda
APRC/20/2 Rev.1	State of Food and Agriculture in Asia and the Pacific Region, including Future Prospects and Emerging Issues
APRC/20/3	Setting regional priorities to manage water for agriculture under conditions of water scarcity
APRC/20/4	Building resilience of small-scale fisheries to ensure food security and nutrition in the Pacific
APRC/20/5	Building sustainable and resilient food systems in Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/6	Results and Priorities for FAO Activities in the Region
APRC/20/6 WA1	Overview of FAO's Strategic Objective Programme
APRC/20/6 WA2	Contribution of Results in the Asia-Pacific Region to FAO Strategic Objectives in the 2018-19 Biennium
APRC/20/6 WA3	FAO Country Planning and Programming in the context of repositioning the United Nations development system
APRC/20/6 WA4 Rev.1	Corporate Outcome Assessment 2019 Asia and the Pacific Regional Results
APRC/20/6 WA5	Update on the development of the new Strategic Framework
APRC/20/7	Decentralized Offices Network
APRC/20/8	Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023 for the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/9	Bytes to Sustain Our Bites: Leveraging Digital Agriculture for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
APRC/20/10	FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative: a New Approach
APRC/20/11	The Committee on World Food Security (CFS): 45 Years of Promoting Food Security and Nutrition through Partnership and Policy Convergence
APRC/20/12	The impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific and FAO's response
<b>INF Series</b>	
<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Title</b>
APRC/20/INF/ Rev.2	Provisional Timetable
APRC/20/INF/2 Rev.2	Provisional List of Documents
APRC/20/INF/3 Rev.1	Information Note

APRC/20/INF/4	Statement by the Director-General
APRC/20/INF/5	Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
APRC/20/INF/6	Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/INF/7	Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
APRC/20/INF/8	Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation
APRC/20/INF/9	Second Joint FAO and Pacific Community (SPC) Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Meeting Communiqué
APRC/20/INF/10	Report on the Animal Production and Health Commission for Asia and the Pacific (APHCA)
APRC/20/INF/11	The Digitalization of Food and Agriculture
APRC/20/INF/12	Report of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission
APRC/20/INF/13	Report of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) and the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW 2019)
APRC/20/INF/14	Report of the Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC) and Update on Fall Armyworm in Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/INF/15	Report on African Swine Fever (ASF) in Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/INF/16	Report on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)
APRC/20/INF/17	Report on work in the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/INF/18	Report on the FAO Regional Consultative Meeting on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors in Asia and the Pacific
APRC/20/INF/19 Rev.1	Statement by the Spokesperson of the Private Sector Consultation
APRC/20/INF/20	Report by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) of the regional synthesis of lessons learned from, and trends identified in the country programme evaluations: in Asia and the Pacific 2014-2019
APRC/20/INF/21	International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) 2020
APRC/20/INF/22	United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)
APRC/20/INF/23 Rev.1	Update of the Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition
APRC/20/INF/24 Rev.1	Food Loss and Waste Measurement Linked to the Food Loss Analysis Methodology
APRC/20/INF/25 Rev.1	UN Food Systems Summit